



About the Gallery
Education Programs
Exhibitions and Collections

Gift Shop
Membership
Newsroom

Artists Online

Current Exhibitions

Past Exhibitions

Permanent Collection

Études/Studies: Two Ways of Working from a Model

Karen Fletcher & Isabella Stefanescu

October 9, 2004 to January 3, 2005.

Opening October 17 from 2:00 to 5:00 p.m.



KM8, Karen Fletcher



Gesture with bamboo Pole, Isabella Stefanescu

Intimate Distance: Études/Studies by Karen Fletcher and Isabella Stefanescu

The exhibition *Études/Studies* by Karen Fletcher and Isabella Stefanescu is a distillation of a kind of intricate simplicity that is the essence of an artist transcribing a model's pose. The exhibition's title borrows the word *études* from the world of classical music, where it refers to scores written to develop particular musical techniques that are also played for their aesthetic value. By pairing it with the word *studies*, the artists emphasize that this exhibition is about work consciously prepared and carefully repeated. Their title alludes to expressions of creative process as well as

to the intimate distance achieved when artists scrutinize, contemplate and frankly record a nude figure.

Études/Studies is, simply and literally, a product of weekly meetings between Stefanescu and Fletcher and a changing roster of models. The models these artists worked from are also an organizing principle for the exhibition: matching views of their subjects were selected from studies that Fletcher formed using earthenware finished with oxides, stains, and diluted porcelain slip, and that Stefanescu rendered on paper or vellum with chalk and ink. By including earthenware sculptures as well as drawings in this exhibition, these artists invite us to consider ways a pose or a gesture can be at once similar and dissimilar when articulated by different hands in two- or three-dimensions. Grouped by model in the installation, the result affirms the truth of the sentiment that art is like science because both involve on-going research. This is an exhibition about learning through observation and repetition, and the excitement as well as the frustration of getting it “right”—whatever that means, really.

The practice of working from a figure model involves concentration and dedication that, stripped of romantic allusions, reveals the labour that is at the core of why artists often call their practice studio work. For Fletcher and Stefanescu, this means intentionally including works that reveal their process. For instance, in some pieces lines are started, then revised; paper is quickly added to paper when a larger drawing surface is needed; and missing hands, feet and limbs are cues that a pose ended before the artist’s study was complete. They also signal the formal nature of the process, one that emphasizes outline, shape, volume, abstraction and design while a geometry is constructed from the raw material of the human body. Both artists work from a vista of descriptive clarity and their work represents an abiding interest in the challenge of process candidly revealed.

What Fletcher and Stefanescu assert are figure studies that are a forthright response to the spontaneity of a model’s gesture even as they seek to balance the privileged intimacy afforded by the study of an unclothed model with the objectivity necessary to absorb and then describe that experience. The artist Paula Modersohn-Becker wrote in her diary in 1903 that she wanted to “express the soft vibration of things, the texture in itself. The strange expectant quality that hovers over matte objects (skin, [my husband] Otto’s forehead...) that I must strive to convey in its great and simple beauty.” Her words serve as reminders that the intimate distance probed by artists like Karen Fletcher and Isabella Stefanescu is filled with the wondrous, ineffable magic of discovery.

Anna-Marie Larsen is a writer and curator living in Waterloo.

Paula Modersohn-Becker was quoted in *Women Artists: Recognition and Reappraisal From the Early Middle Ages to the Twentieth Century* by Karen Petersen and J.J. Wilson. New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1976, p 109.





Guesture - K with Pillory Position, Isabella Stefanescu



KM9, Karen Fletcher



Study - E reclining, Isabella Stefanescu



CZ2, Karen Fletcher



Study - L. reclining, Isabella Stefanescu



LO9, Karen Fletcher

Canadian Clay & Glass Gallery
25 Caroline St. N., Waterloo, ON N2L 2Y5 ☎ Phone: (519) 746-1882 ☎ Fax: (519) 746-6396
E-mail the Gallery ☎ Site map